



News

of the Iowa Mission District of the North American Lutheran Church

www.iowamissiondistrict.com

August 2019

A Word from the Dean

WALKING BY THE SPIRIT

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.” Galatians 5:23

The book of Galatians is sometimes referred to as “the charter of Christian freedom.” In this epistle Paul fights tooth and nail for the doctrine of justification by grace through faith apart from works of the law, in opposition to those who would insist on adherence to the law’s demands as the prerequisite for salvation. Throughout the first 4 chapters Paul uses all of his rhetorical skills to drive home the point that it is only by faith in Christ Jesus that we are made righteous before God. Whenever we point to our own good works we become slaves to the demands of the law – and, if we are honest with ourselves, can only despair of our failure to fulfill what the law commands. But in Christ we are freed from the demands of the law in order to live by faith in Jesus and the righteousness He imparts to us.

Beginning in the 5th chapter, then, Paul addresses the question he asks also in Romans 6: “Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?” If we are freed from the law’s demands, then, shall we simply do whatever pleases us? “No!” Paul says. This would be to fall back into the slavery of sin. We are freed from our need to justify ourselves by our own strength, not so that we can serve our own whims and desires, but so that we can serve our neighbor in love. There is a great and wonderful irony at work here. When we are finally freed from the need to justify ourselves before God – a thing which we are never able to do on our own – then it is, that we are able to do it – by the power of the Spirit at work in us. In other words, when we stop trying to fulfill the law’s demands, and simply trust in Jesus’ righteousness, then those demands are fulfilled.

But since we still live in a fallen world, we are constantly tempted to turn away from trusting in Jesus’ righteousness and look once again to ourselves. So Paul exhorts his readers to “walk in the Spirit, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh.” Again, this is not a call to pull ourselves up by our spiritual bootstraps and steel ourselves from the temptations of our worldly desires, but it is a call, once again, to let go of our reliance on ourselves and trust in what Jesus has done for us. The freedom we are given in Christ is not a license to act in whatever way we wish, but the freedom to follow God’s Word in faith – trusting in Jesus and loving our neighbor. It is the freedom to be bound to one another in love. As Martin Luther puts it:

“A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none.
A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.”

So, then, as the theme of our Lutheran Week says, may we be found:
“Walking in the Spirit with the fruit of the Spirit.”

Pastor Marshall Hahn, Dean, Iowa Mission District, NALC

Important Announcement

The Iowa Mission District fiscal year ends August 31. Please be sure to send your 2019 donations to Pastor Gary Burkhalter (Mission District treasurer) so he will receive them prior to the deadline. All checks sent to the Mission District are to be made out to the *Iowa Mission District, NALC*, and sent to Pastor Gary Burkhalter at 312 E Mission St, Strawberry Point, IA 52076.



Sola Gratia—Received and Shared

Pr. Barbara M. Wills
Peace Lutheran
Northwood, Iowa

The Apostle John, at the beginning of his Gospel, speaks of God's amazing grace in these words:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men.... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.... For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. (John 1:1-4, 14, 16-17)

"Saved by grace"; "Grace Alone." We Lutherans are familiar with these phrases—the Apostle Paul made this argument in the early church, as he defended the salvation of Gentile Christians and refuted those who would have everyone convert to Judaism before they could become followers of Jesus. (See Ephesians 2:8-9; chapters 3-5 in Romans, et al.) Dr. Martin Luther of Wittenberg rediscovered Paul's theology of God's saving grace, and it became one of the pillars of Lutheran theology.

The ancient Hebrews also spoke of God's mercy and grace. The term "*hesed*" in Hebrew is sometimes translated as "steadfast love", and the grace of God in Greek is "*charis*". Both terms refer to God's undeserved mercy and kindness given to His people. The fullness of this love comes to us in the person of Christ Jesus, who was sent to do for sinful human beings what we could not do for ourselves—perfectly fulfill the Law and take our punishment for sin upon Himself. In His death and resurrection, Christ Jesus pays our debt to the Father in full, and bestows on us His righteousness and eternal life.

Having said that, we've said it all. Except.... Except, some of us have trouble accepting grace. We feel guilty because Jesus died for us, and feel like we have to pay Him back somehow. Except, Jesus' claim on our lives sometimes sounds more like law than grace to us, and we turn His love into a to-do list of requirements instead of a relationship of mutual love. Except, we don't get the point or realize the value of the gift and think

that, because there are no "requirements", we are free to ignore our Divine Benefactor and live to our own destruction.

Human understanding is so limited, and human language so inadequate, that we have difficulty sorting out God's grace and how to articulate—and live in/and out of—that unmerited love and favor. Perhaps because of our limitations, Jesus often used parables to try to get the point across. One of my favorites is the story of the unforgiving servant in Matthew 18:23-34. A man who owes his master more than he could ever repay, pleads for mercy, and even makes the impossible promise to repay the debt. Having pity on the man, the master forgives the entire amount and lets him go free. No strings; no obligations. This man, having the enormous burden lifted from his shoulders, leaves the presence of his master, and immediately encounters a man who owes him a small sum. What does he do? Logic would suggest that in his joy and relief, he would share that grace and goodness with his friend. But instead, he threatens the man and has him thrown in debtors' prison. Those who witness this breach of decency, report the incident to the master who had just forgiven the first man, and he calls him back and sends him to debtors' prisoner. Did the master *rescind* the forgiveness? Or did the man fail to *receive* what was given?

The grace our Lord gives us is not a business transaction. It is an invitation to live in the grace and graciousness of the love of God—in a loving relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is impossible to recognize God's grace at work in our lives without aspiring to share that grace with others. As long as we are limited by our human condition, we will struggle with our sinful nature, but as long as we recognize God's grace, we will continue to try to share it with one another. Humility. Repentance. Prayer. Seeking God's guidance through Scripture. All these ways of communicating with our Lord help us maintain the connection with the One whose grace and mercy calls us to share in His grace, truth and life—forever.

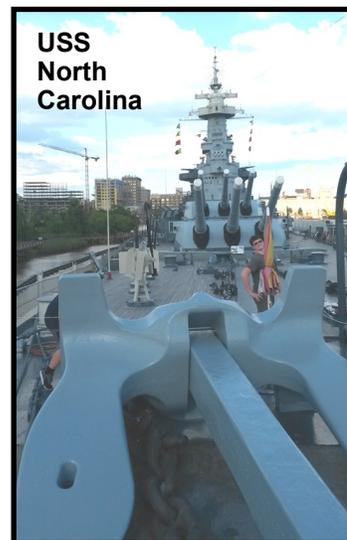
This and That from around the Iowa Mission District

On July 13th, eighteen members of Peace Lutheran Church in Northwood toured Reiman Gardens in Ames for their annual "Peaceful Iowa Excursion". Each year the congregation hosts an outing to visit an Iowa location of interest. It's a time for fellowship and enjoying God's creation. The theme at Reiman Gardens this year is "games", and there were sites throughout the gardens that offered visitors an opportunity to participate in a garden related game.



Youth Mission Trip

The youth and adults who went on this year's Youth Mission Trip to South Carolina returned July 30th. Here are a couple of pictures to pique your interest. You can read a full report and see more pictures in next months newsletter.



Announcements



[This](#)

Please join us on August 18, 2019, to honor Rev. Ted Ager for his 60th Anniversary of ordination. A program will be held at the Old East Paint Creek Lutheran Church, Waterville, Iowa, at 3 pm with a reception following. We would like anyone whom Pastor Ted baptized, confirmed, or married to stand and be recognized at the program. If you have a special story that you wish to have shared during the program, please send to: Rev. Ken Kimball, 1783 Elon Dr., Waterville, Iowa 52170

We hope that you can join us for this special occasion, but if you are unable to attend and wish to send a note, please send to: Rev. Ted Ager, 1675 Elon Dr., Waterville, Iowa 52170

2019 Upcoming Events

August 5-9 – Luther Week in Indianapolis, IN. Theme: *Walking by the Spirit with the Fruit of the Spirit* (Note: **Election of NALC Bishop!**)

September 14 – Iowa Mission District Convocation, First Lutheran, Manchester, IA

September 28—**Stewards of God's Influence** workshop, Bethany, Laurens, IA

October 5—**Stewards of God's Influence** workshop, First, Manchester, IA

These workshops are presented by the NALC's Living and Giving Stewardship Team.

Both are from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Presenters are Pastors Tony D. Ede and Ron Voss. For more information or to register, please contact Pastor Voss at 312-513-3567 or servantofchristnalc@gmail.com.

April 20-21, 2020—Pastors'/Lay Ministers' Retreat, Riverside Bible Camp, Story City

Donations and Correspondence

Checks sent to the Mission District for support should be made out to the *Iowa Mission District, NALC*, and mailed to Pastor Gary Burkhalter at 312 E Mission St, Strawberry Point, IA 52076.

Correspondence for Mr. Craig Lease, Mission District Secretary, should be sent to 405 7th St. N., Northwood, IA 50459

Items for the Mission District newsletter (pictures, news, etc.) are best sent via e-mail to Pastor Barbara Wills at barbaramwills@gmail.com.

The Iowa Mission District website may be found at: www.iowamissiondistrict.com. If your congregation has a web site, and you would like to have the web address linked to your church name on the Mission District web site, please send the web address to me, Pastor Barbara Wills, at barbaramwills@gmail.com.



Steadfast In God's Word Thy Will Be Done—Take Up Your Cross

Many people followed Jesus around during His earthly life. Some came out of curiosity to see what all the excitement was about with this Rabbi from Galilee. They wanted to hear what He had to say—as one might watch a new series on television that everyone is talking about. Others heard of His miraculous healings—maybe they could finally get some relief from an ailment that was keeping them from working or participating in activities with family and friends. And many understood, at least in part, that this amazing man seemed to be fulfilling the ancient prophecies about the Messiah from David's line. Could it be that He had finally come? Everyone wanted something from Jesus. Everyone had some idea of who He might be or how they might benefit from an association with Him.

But Jesus knew their hearts, as He knows ours. He would sometimes challenge their preconceived ideas about Him. To the rich young man who asked what he must do to inherit eternal life, and who assured Jesus that he had followed all the Law throughout his life, the Lord said that he must sell all his possession, give the money to the poor, and follow Him. The man went away sadly for he had many possessions. (Matthew 19:16-21) When Jesus told His disciples that it was difficult for the wealthy to get into heaven, they asked, "Then who can be saved?" He said it was impossible for human beings, but not for God. (Matthew 19:23-26) As Jesus' ministry unfolded, it became clear that there was something more going on here than a new king who would restore an earthly kingdom and provide wealth and comfort for those who were loyal to him. And there was something more than simply following a list of do's and don'ts—the letter of the Law was insufficient—Jesus' teachings on anger and lust in Matthew 5 make that clear. It isn't enough not to kill—being angry with another person transgresses the law against murder. Looking at another person with lust transgresses the law against adultery if that person is not one's spouse. And then Jesus told His disciples, "If any [one] would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." (Luke 9:23) Who, indeed, can be saved?

The life of following Jesus is about daily cross bearing. This is an uncomfortable statement for us, and it's been my observation that there seem to be two primary ways many people apparently view cross-bearing. One is to assume that our "personal cross" consists of all the troubles we have in life—everything from recalcitrant children and overbearing mothers-in-law to financial trouble and health concerns. The other extreme is to think that we must be rejected—or even hated—for our faith, and if not, then we're somehow failing to take up our cross. In both cases the understanding seems to be that personal suffering is required—and perhaps even sought.

As we read Scripture, however, neither of these ideas seem to fit what Jesus says about being a child of God

or one of His followers. While being faithful to the Lord may bring suffering—rejection from family or friends, or even death—there are many saints in the Bible who were loved and died at a good old age. Good and ill befall all people because we live in a broken and sinful world. Jesus says the rain falls on the just and unjust (Matthew 5:45) and questions the presumption of his disciples that those who encounter disastrous events are worse sinners than others (Luke 13:1-5). It may be that followers of Christ will bear personal trials with greater patience and that their trust in the Lord will be a witness to His love in their lives, but this does not make such suffering a cross that we take up day by day. Jesus also tells us to pray for our enemies and be kind to them (Matthew 5:43-47) which indicates that we are to witness to our faith in ways that are compassionate and respectful, and not seek to share our faith in ways that are judgmental or deliberately invite rejection. How else will we win people to Christ if we don't set an example of His mercy and grace?

From these texts, it seems apparent that the cross we are to take up each day is the cross of Christ, by putting our trust in Him and *His suffering*, death, and resurrection. This is affirmed by Jesus' words to Nicodemus in John 3:16—"For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that all who believe in Him should not perish but have everlasting life"—and to those who asked Him what it meant to be doing the works of God in John 6:28—"This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent [i.e. Jesus]." It is our persistent and faithful trust in the Lord and His love for us that is our daily cross—the cross that saves us and brings us into His Kingdom. We bear the cross of Christ on our foreheads, baptized into Christ's death in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and raised with Him to everlasting life in His resurrection. In 1 Corinthians 1:18, the Apostle Paul reminds us that, "... the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." We take up our cross when we discipline ourselves each day to "hear" His words (through prayerful reading and study of Holy Scripture), and to listen for the messages the Holy Spirit gives us through the words of our Lord, as He promised the disciples: "...the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." (John 14:26) We also bear the cross in acts of compassion and forgiveness in our daily interactions with others and as we daily repent and seek forgiveness for our sins. In thus bearing the cross of Christ in the world—and to the world—we follow faithfully where Our Lord leads us.

Pastor Barbara M. Wills

Congregations of the Iowa Mission District

Ackley: **Our Saviour's**, Dan Buhs, Lay Minister
Avoca: **Trinity**, Pr. Eric Meissner
Badger: **Badger Lutheran**, Pr. Scott Meier
Boyden: **St. John**, Pr. Mark Lund
Dorchester: **Waterloo Ridge**, Call Process
Eagle Grove: **Evangelical Lutheran**, Pr. Jason Cooper
Eagle Grove: **Samuel Lutheran**, Pr. Rich Taylor
Ellsworth: **Trinity**, Pastor Jon Rollefson
Emmons, MN: **Emmons**, Pr. David Schafer, Interim
Gilmore City: **First**, Tracy Nerem, Lay Minister
Grafton: **Emmanuel**, Pr. Solveig Zamzow
Greene: **St. John (Vilmar)**, Pr. Christopher Martin
Gunder: **Marion**, Pr. Marshall Hahn
Harlan: **Bethlehem**, Pr. Ronald Rasmussen
+Huxley: **Shepherd of the Prairie**,
Scott Licht, Lay Minister
Irwin: **St. Paul**, Pr. Ronald Rasmussen
Laurens: **Bethany**, Pr. David Klappenbach
Manchester: **First**, Pr. Tony D. Ede
+Monona, **Faith**: Pr. Mel Harris
Northwood: **Peace**, Pr. Barbara Wills
Palmer: **St. John's**
Plainfield: **St. John**, Pr. Kim Thacker
Readlyn: **St. Matthew**, Pr. Jean Rabary
Readlyn: **Zion**, Pr. Jean Rabary
+Robins: **Servants of Christ**, Pr. Ron Voss
+Rochester, MN: **Emmanuel**, Pr. David Steffenson
Ruthven: **Zion**, Pr. Thomas Summerfield
St. Ansgar: **First**, Pr. Christopher Staley
St. Olaf: **Norway**, Pr. Marshall Hahn
Sheldon: **St. Paul**, Call process
+Sibley: **Faith**, Pr. Tim Nappe
Spencer: **Trinity**
Strawberry Pt.: **Mission in Christ**, Pr. Gary Burkhalter
Thor: **Ullensvang**, Pr. Darryl Landsverk
Waterville. **Old East Paint Creek**, Pr. Ken Kimball
Waukon: **Old West Paint Creek**, Pr. Ken Kimball

+ indicates mission congregation

The following pastors are available for pulpit supply:

Pastor Paul Breddin—515--528-2284
Pastor James Glesne—563-380-8110
Pastor Jack Miller—(507) 798-2408
Pastor David Steffenson—253-302-9845 (Sundays)
Pastor Paul Weeg- -641-381-0675



Iowa Mission District Leadership

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Pastor Burkhalter, Treasurer—
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Chris Schlee—
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Mission District Communicator
(newsletter editor/web master):

Pastor Barbara Wills—
barbaramwills@gmail.com

*The Iowa Mission District
has 36 congregations.*



Pastor Tim Nappe is also available for pulpit supply. His primary focus is his ministry with "Reaching the Unreached", and he will share information about this mission work whenever he does pulpit supply for a congregation. Contact information: 712-331-4245. Or email at pastortim.milford@gmail.com